DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 841 CS 208 693

AUTHOR Duvall-Flynn, Joan
TITLE Writing for Reading: Will Resistant Readers Teach Each Other? Classroom Research Study No. 7.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Berkeley. School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 35p.; Prepared through National Writing Project. For a related document, see CS 208 683.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Department, Bay Area Writing Project, 5635 Tolman Hall, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. Request "Publications for Teachers" for ordering information.
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Attitude Change; Case Studies; Educational Theories; Grade 5; Intermediate Grades; *Reading Improvement; *Remedial Reading; Self Esteem; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Role; Writing Difficulties; *Writing Improvement; Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS National Writing Project; *Reading Writing Relationship; Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

This monograph presents the case study of four fifth grade boys involved in a writing program designed to teach reading skills and to address the following questions: (1) Are reading and writing really related in any practical sense? (2) What effects might humane, process-oriented writing instruction have on student achievement, self-esteem, and attitude to language? and (3) If students who receive such instruction do improve as writers, will they also improve as readers? The monograph reflects each boy's efforts to produce first, second, and further drafts to expand and clarify his original intent, and concludes with the teacher's discussion of the learning success of each student. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED251841

WRITING FOR READING

Will Resistant Readers Teach Each Other?

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

By

Joan Duvall-Flynn
Fifth Grade Teacher
West Chester Area School District
West Chester, Pennsylvania

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Miles Myers

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS208693

University of California, Berkeley
National Writing Project

Classroom Research Study No. 7

The National Writing Project is an effort by school teachers, college faculty, and curriculum specialists to improve the teaching of writing at all levels of education. The Project is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the School of Education of the University of California, Berkeley, local universities, school districts, and other funding agencies. The findings of this study do not necessarily represent the views of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Individuals desiring information concerning the National Writing Project should write to National Writing Project, Tolman Hall, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.

Series editor: Gerald Camp

Cover design: Guy Joy

Typesetting: Janet Kodish

Copyright 1983 The Regents of the University of California, Berkeley.

Preface

Are reading and writing really related in any practical sense? What effects might humane, process-oriented writing instruction have on student achievement, self-esteem, and attitude to language? If students who receive such instruction do improve as writers, will they also improve as readers? Joan Duvall Flynn's case study of four fifth grade boys probes these questions and demonstrates some specific relations between the two "language arts."

Brian, Jose, Chris, and Danny are an obstinate quartet of reluctant readers and writers before becoming sparked by Flynn's comprehensive writing program. Their drive to produce first, second, and further drafts to expand and clarify their original intent is especially worth studying because they initially presented such problems as students.

In 1980, Joan Flynn offered the first presentation of the Pennsylvania Writing Project's first Summer Institute. Because she sat at my left every day for four weeks and was frequently my writing partner, respondent, critic, and helper, I got to know first-hand the depth of her commitment to her teaching. Her current study of some relations between reading and writing is, I like to think, an outgrowth of those exciting days of sharing. It will help teachers who continually search for ways to coach their students toward competency as readers and writers.

Robert H. Weiss, *Director*
Pennsylvania Writing Project
West Chester State University
West Chester, PA

"Aw, man, everybody knows that spiders can't talk. This stuff's too hard. I quit!" With these words began the final defeat of the 4^1 basal reading group. All year the group of seven had been fragmented. Eager to learn, industrious and self motivated, the four girls progressed steadily through the reading book. The three boys involved presented a striking contrast. Lack of self control, short attention spans and low frustration levels characterized the behavior of the "terrible trio" which dragged, giggled, and flirted along in their efforts to hide the paralyzing fear that someone would discover what was so obvious. They could not function with a basal reader.

Brian--white, male, age eleven, first grade repeater--left fourth grade having just completed a 3^2 reading book. The teacher's end of the year gift to him was the 4^1 basal which he was to use this year. Struggle as he might, for some as yet unexplained reason, he could not read and comprehend the stories or manage the accompanying workbook or skill sheets.

Jose—Hispanic, male, age eleven, hindered by his move from a Spanish speaking school into an English speaking situation—had lost a year in second grade. His decoding skills were strong but his comprehension was devastated because he made literal translations from English to Spanish as he read. He appeared to lack understanding of American English idioms and figures of speech. His tendency to translate from Spanish to English when creating language became obvious as we worked through the writing process.

Chris—Hispanic, male, age eleven, first grade repeater—was hindered in his reading progress by his difficulty in sequencing thoughts. Complete pages of writing confused him. He reversed words when reading or often began with the middle syllable. He made perceptive and mature inferences. He had a keen understanding of cause and effect and author's purpose. His problem seemed to be getting the words off the page to run them through his brain.

And then there was Danny. Danny began fifth grade as a reading

group of one. He was the child who still received instruction from a 3^1 basal. It was not expedient to place him in a fourth grade group of below-level readers because he was eleven years old and terribly frustrated with his many noticeable differences from the general student population.

The reading specialist assigned homeroom populations on the basis of reading level. The twenty-seven children of my room were either members of the Literature Group, all of whom read at the sixth grade level or above, or they were members of the 4^1 reading group. Danny was the exception to this placement.

In addition to the daily reading instruction, I required each child to read a book each week. For the first half of the year they submitted written book reports every Wednesday morning. For the second half of the year they made oral book reports during the reading period one day a week.

Every Thursday I gave a list of twenty vocabulary words. The children defined them and wrote a short story using the words. They kept all the work in a small composition book. The stories were read aloud the following Thursday. Then, on Friday, they took a test by writing the definitions for the vocabulary words from memory. I presented other reading and vocabulary development through commercial supplementary materials.

On March fifth I realized the need to divided the 4^1 reading group into two sections. The girls were moving into the 4^2 level basal. The boys could not. The pained look of failure which crossed the faces of the boys as I explained the group changes caused my chest to ache. They realized their lack of progress, their lack of interest, and their lack of effort toward the basal reading program; but they wanted to succeed in reading. The options open to us were limited. They could remain a below-level group whose purpose became that of posing as behavior problems to avoid the label of "dumb." Or, they could be given a program which labeled them as individual yet capable.

During that evening I compared several basals for a general selection of skills taught on the fourth grade level. There emerged a list of thirty-six common reading and language skills. I believed that these skills could be taught through the personal compositions of the children.

On March sixth I approached the reading specialist with the list and asked for her feelings on combining Chris, Brian, and Jose with Danny to form a "Composing Group." I was trusted to set up a writing program designed to teach reading skills to these four people. Figure One is a list of the general fourth grade skills which had been identified.

SURVEY OF READING SKILLS BEING REVIEWED
OR TAUGHT AT THE FOURTH GRADE LEVEL

Detail	Setting	Parts of Speech
Main Idea	Plot	Suffixes
Roles	Conclusions	Prefixes
Theme	Characterizations	Similes
Synonyms	Character Traits	Metaphors
Predicting	Cause & Effect	Biography
Climax	Realism & Fantasy	Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
Pronouns	Syllabication	Conjunction
Antonyms	Verb Forms	Commas in Series
Subject-Predicate	Auxilliaries	Question Transformation
Ordering Events	Past Tense	Question Words
Form	Combining	
Fact & Opinion		

Figure One

On March seventh the "frustrated four" were called to a group meeting. Because Writing Laboratory, a process approach including prewriting, writing, rewriting, had been a part of our classroom procedure all year, there was no fear of composing on the part of the boys. They had each been published and had pieces of which they were proud. They agreed that they would rather study language skills and reading outside the basal and were very enthusiastic about the fact that there was no possible way to fail. Any work that was produced would be viewed on a continuum which started at "unfinished" and headed toward "finished." The closer it got to finished the more correctness of form, grammar, spelling, and punctuation would be apparent in the piece of writing. When a piece was finished it was to be published to be used as reading material for others.

Our first topic centered on the concept of setting. This seemed a safe topic because all the details necessary to describe the writer's location were visible or at least familiar to him. The four writers were asked to choose a comfortable place to sit and to write about their setting. They were given these questions:

- What is your immediate location?
- What do you see in the area around you?
- What larger place is your location part of?

Chris wrote his first draft:

I am in a booth two green chairs and my dictionary and my setting paper I am in the upper pod in hillsdale school the booth is right nere the teachers desks and there a big bulletin board A green chalk board with a big brown book shelf with a lot of book the clock says twenty of eleven there six boxes of crayons and cup of coffee I had moved I am in Mrs. Roseberry room.

It is right near the gym and the teachers room and the lunch room and right beside the dark room and Mr Stevensons room and near the kindergardens. It is near a field and the Art center and a cornfield were they plant Christmas trees in the winter time.
New Jersey, Maryland, New York, Virginia, West Virginia.

At our conference on this draft Chris was asked to do several things:

1. Circle any proper nouns that needed to be capitalized.
2. Decide if any of the conjunctions could be replaced by comma in series.
3. Look for punctuation errors.

Chris made some revisions on his first draft:

SETTING

I am in a booth two green chairs and my dictionary and my setting paper I am in the upper pod in Hillsdale School the booth right near the teachers desks and there ~~are~~ is a big bulletin board A green chalk board with a big brown book shelf with a lot of book the clock says twenty of eleven there ~~are~~ is six boxes of crayons and ~~a~~ cup of coffee I had moved. I am in Mrs. Roseberry room.

It is right near the gym, ~~and~~ the teachers room and the lunch room and right beside the dark room, ~~and~~ Mr. Stevenson's room ~~and~~ near the kindergardens.
~~H~~Hillsdale
K is near a field and the Art Center and a cornfield. were they plant Christmas trees in the winter time.
New Jersey, Maryland, New York, Virginia, West Virginia.

The next step for Chris was to write his second draft. He came to me for a conference the next day bringing this piece:*

*I am in a booth with two green chairs an orange bulletin board and a white table and a rug. ~~and~~ My dictionary paper, setting paper, ~~and~~ the booth

* While Chris and I met, the other children completed reading assignments. They did not interrupt when I held a private student-teacher conference.

are
~~is~~ in the upper pod right near the teachers desks.

I am in Mrs. Roseberry room. There ~~is~~ a green chalk board with a big brown book shelf with a lot of books with a clock and six boxes of crayons and a cup of coffee here.

Mrs. Roseberrs room is right near the gym, ~~and~~ near the teachers room and near the lunch room, right beside the dark room. ~~It~~ is also near Mr. Stevenson and the Kindergardens room.

Hillsdale is right near the field and the Art Center and the corn field where in the winter time they plant Christmas trees.

The states around Pennsylvania ~~is~~ are New Jersey, Maryland, New York, Virginia, West Virginia.

In our next conference I asked Chris what he had done so far that pleased him most. He explained that he had used the U.S. wall map for the first time when he decided to include the states around Pennsylvania in his piece. He also had changed the shape of his piece by using paragraphs when he changed ideas.

I then asked Chris what he planned to do with his piece on setting as it was now. He told me that he planned to make it neater and more correct. He wrote his third draft in this fashion:

I am in a booth with two green chairs, and orange bulletin board and a white table and a rug. My dictionary, paper, setting paper and the booth are in the upper pod right near the teachers desk.

I am in Mrs. Roseberrys room. There is a green chalk board with a big brown book shelf with a lot of books with a clock and six boxes of crayons and a cup of coffee here.

Mrs. Roseberrys room is right near the gym and near the teachers room and the lunch room, which is right beside the dark room. It is also near Mr. Stevenson and the Kindergarden rooms.

Hillsdale is right near the field and the Art Center and the corn field where in the winter time they plant Christmas trees.

The states around Pennsylvania are New Jersey, Maryland, New York, Virginia, West Virginia and Ohio.

With this draft Chris felt finished with the setting piece. We discussed setting as the sense of place, time, and background created by a writer.

On March tenth the topic for the Composing Group was characterization. The purpose was to understand how a writer describes characters in literature.

Chris began a piece on Superman. He came to me because he needed information about Superman so that he could include details in

his piece. He remembered the card catalogue in the library and wanted to check it because he could find no information on his topic in the encyclopedia. He found no material in the library. When he came to me again, we discussed the fact that Superman was fictitious and that any information on him might be categorized under comic or cartoon characters.

Another trip to the library proved fruitless as our librarian explained to Chris that we did not have the reference materials that he needed. The experience was not wasted, however. On the following day Chris took Brian to the library to teach him the card catalogue system so that Brian could locate some information which he was lacking.

Danny, who had also chosen Superman as his topic, pursued this theme in order to complete his character sketch.

Draft I:

Superman is a hero he is strong. He saves people he is vere friendly. He is vere brave he can

Draft II:

Superman is a hero he is strong. He saves people he is vere friendly. He is vere brave n he can fly weny he is mad. He wall get his enemy. The joker.

But there are alot of enemy to. weny ther are all the enemy in jail there. wall be no more! stealing. But if one get out he wall let go the other enene go.

Then there wall be more stealing.

Danny came to confer with me on the second draft. In his dictionary he wrote some proper spellings for words he often forgot. From then on he was expected to check his dictionary for these if he became confused. Danny felt proud of the way he read his story. For the first time all year he was writing in cursive.

Flynn: You must feel very creative today. I see you're writing fancy. Your cursive is very pretty.

Danny: Yeah! I'm fixing these words. Can you show me how to make a cursive *v*?

Flynn: Do you know how to make a cursive *v*?

Danny: I forget. I learn lots of things, but I forget them.

He leafed through his personal dictionary lettering the pages. He got to the *x* page.

Danny: I wonder what words I'll put on this page. I know! I'll look for the *x's* in the dictionary and see what words there are. . . .

There aren't many. . . . I'll count 'em. . . . There are twenty-one words, Mrs. Flynn.

Flynn: Can you see the phonetic spellings next to the entry words?

Danny: You mean the ones with parentheses? That tells you how the word's supposed to sound.

Flynn: Right! Do you think you could try to read those words? See how many you can figure out from the phonetic spellings.

Danny: Here is *xylophone!* I'll put that on my *x* page.

Draft III:

Superman is a hero he is strong he saves people. He's very friendly. And he is very brave. He can fly when he is mad. He will get his enemy Lex Luther. But there are alot of enemies too when all the enemies are in jail, there will be no more stealing but if one gets out he will let the other enemies go then there will be more stealing but superhero all ways win.

After this revision Danny moved away from the piece. He let it sit and moved to an autobiographical story. I watched.

On March 20, thirteen children left the classroom to go to the special program for gifted students which meets once per week. On these days the remaining students worked on a school newspaper publication. As a group we decided what articles to include in our current periodical. There was a water shortage in our area, so Brian decided to do an article on water conservation.

Draft I: (printed)

You, yes you can conserve water! How? start by fixing leakes in your pips. If you want to water your garden this year, This is what you do. When it raens get a BIG Barl and put it under the rain spout and the water will go in the Barl and get a hose and sipon the water on the garden.

Take a shower with some one in your family or turn off the water when you Brush your teeth

Draft II: (in cursive)

You, yes you, can conserve water

How? start by:

1. *fixing all of the leakes in you pipes.*
2. *If you want to water your garden this year this is what you do, get a big barrel and put it under the rain spout and let it fill up and*

get a nose and sipon it on the granden

3. *Take a shower with soneone in your fanley*
4. *Don't let the water run when you buch your teeth and face*

By Brian

Draft III: (final copy, cursive)

How to conserve water
You, yes you, can conserve water

how? start by:

1. *Fixing all of the leakes in all of your pipes.*
2. *If you want to water your garden this is what you do, get a big barrel and put it under the rain spout and let it fill up and get a hose and sipon it on the garden.*
3. *Take a shower with someone in your family.*
4. *Don't let the water run when you brush your teeth or face.*

Thank you
Brian McKenna

Draft three of Brian's piece had evolved from self-initiated revisions as he sat with his piece and applied language skills from past learning. He had never done this before. He asked for a conference only after draft three was completed. His sense of ownership was so strong and his revision efforts so thorough, the piece was accepted for publication.

During our discussion on heroes, which preceded the writing of character sketches, Jose told me about a Puerto Rican folk hero whom he found funny. He decided to write a story about him for the current newspaper publication. Between March 20 and March 27 he went through seven drafts on the story. He wrote the first draft at home and brought it in complete with an illustration.

Draft I:

JUAN BOBO

In Puerto Rico there was a man his name is Juan Bobo. One day Juan Bobo's mom sent him to get a pot from the Gonzelez home. He said to the pot you got three legs" and Juan said let see who can get home first. He said that Because the pot had three legs. One day Juan never saw a banana He said mom what is this it is a gineo that means bannana. His mom said eat it. So you know what he done he got the inside and

threw it away and ate the outside. And that is the story of Juan Bobo

By Jose Melendez Santiago

Draft III:

In Puerto Rico there is a folkhero. His name is Juan Bobo. Juan Bobo is dumb. One day Juan's mother sent him to the Gonzalez house to get a pot.

He said to the pot. "You have three legs and let's see who will get home first!" Then Juan put the pot down and he went running home.

He said to his mother, "Did you see the pot. His mother said, "No," So he went back to the place where he left it, and he still saw it where he put it at.

Juan never say a banana so he asked his mother what it was. His mother said, "it is a guineo." That means banana in spanish. His mother said eat it.

And you know what he done he ate the outside and threw away the inside. And that is the story of Juan Bobo.

Draft VII:

In Puerto Rico there is a folk hero. His name is Juan Bobo. Juan Bobo is dumb. Juan is a Puerto Rican. One day Juan's mother sent him to the Gonzalez house to get a pot.

He said to the pot, "you got three legs. Let's see who will get home first." Then Juan put the pot down and he went running home.

He said to his mother, "Did you see the pot?"

His mother said, "No." So he went back and saw the pot still there where he put it.

Juan never saw a banana so he asked his mother what it was. His mother said it was a guineo. That means banana in Spanish. His mother said, "Eat it."

And do you know what he did? He ate the outside and threw away the inside.

His mother sent him to the store to get some cheese from Mr. Santiago. And it was so hot and the cheese so cold that he put the cheese on top of his head.

So when he got home he had the cheese all melted on his head. His mother said, "Where is the cheese?"

"It's on top of my head."

"You cabeza duro." It means hardhead in Spanish. So he didn't

get his allowance for three months.

The next day he went to the corner. He saw a gang and the leader of the gang said, "hey! Juan you see those things moving on the ground?"

"Si, Oscar." said Juan.

"If you eat some you can be in our gang."

Juan said, "O.K." So he did it. And do you know what it was? It was ants. He saw one go up his nose, so he let it go. So every one in the gang started to laugh.

Oscar said, "It was ants."

Juan said, "Oh, no! It was good after all."

He went home and told his mother and father. His father said, "Who was the one who told you to do it?"

"It was Oscar who told me."

Juan's father went to the corner were the gang was. He fought all of them with bricks and sticks. The police came and the dragon gang was arrested.

His father said, "Don't go outside alone. You can go out with me."

One day Juan lost his donuts and it looked just like a rock. So he tried every rock to find the donuts.

The same day in the afternoon he went to the Spanish store with Mr. Fernandez to have a job.

Mrs. Fernandez was a good lady. She gave Juan a job. He worked there for nine years and he changed a lot. That's the story of Juan Bobo.

For the same publication, Danny choose to do an article about his sports injuries. He did not come to confer with me until his fourth draft. At this time he asked if our parent volunteer could help him edit the piece.*

He presented Draft V:

One day I was climbing a fence. I fell down off the fence and landed on my neck. My Mom got me to the hospital as fast as she could. When I got to the x-ray room they said I sprained my neck. I

* Our school district sponsors a Parent Volunteer Program. The participating parents are trained in ways to aide classroom teachers. Teachers request volunteers by specifying the days and times that help is needed. The volunteer co-ordinator attempts to provide parents to meet teacher needs. Our helping mother, Mrs. Blair, came to us for one and one-half hours on Fridays.

had to keep the brace on for six weeks and I was not allowed to go out of the house for six weeks. I was so mad that my Mom said you shouldn't be climbing up the fence in the first place. When it was time for dinner I had to take this medicine before I ate my food. My Mom and Dad made me chew my food 20 times before swallowing, but it still hurt when I swallowed. After dinner I had to go to bed. Six weeks are up now and I am allowed to play football.

By Danny S. Green

On April 2, all four members of the Composing Group had read a book for their weekly book report requirement. This was a first! Chris reported on Muhammed Ali, Jose on Mark Twain, Danny on Johnny Appleseed, and Brian on Evel Knievel.

Brian, Chris, and Jose began autobiographical pieces. Danny sat daily at the typewriter writing leads to a piece about an imaginary trip to the moon. He refused to involve himself with anything else. The group worked on their drafts during the week of April sixth. We had our spring break, and on the Tuesday after Easter the group met for a group conference. It was time to learn if the group had enough confidence to develop formal reading lessons from their personal compositions.

I asked the group if we should tape record the conference so that each reader could listen to and evaluate his own progress, both in his oral reading and in his composing. The boys agreed.

Composing Group conference:

Flynn: Let's have Chris start with his piece about careless play.

Chris: *It was a beautiful day and everybody on my team wanted to play baseball. We were playing up at St. Agnes. Jose was up to bat. He said, "I'll knock this ball down your throat." "Sure you will Jose" said Juan.*

The pitch! Jose hit the ball into right field. Juan went to the wall and made a diving catch.

We were getting ready to go to another park. I went to get the baseball bat out of my house. I got to the wall of St. Agnes. My friend told me to throw the bat up to him, but he missed it and it hit me in the forehead.

My uncle got the car out of the garage and took me to the hospital We must have been going very fast because we got to the hospital in no time flat.

When I got into the hospital they put a needle in my cut six times, and so the skin would be even they cut some skin off with a razor. Then they gave me two stiches inside the cut and seven outside.

When we got home my mom looked at my pupils to see if one was bigger than the other one so she could tell if I had a concussion. I did have a slight one. I am O.K. now.

Flynn: Wow! Boy, that grew didn't it? Would you like to hear how you read it?

Chris listened to himself read through the piece.

Flynn: Did you think that you read more fluently than usual?

Chris: What's fluently?

Flynn: What is fluently?

Brian: Better than usual.

Flynn: Right along. You didn't stop or stumble. You didn't have any problem decoding the words.

Chris: It's probably because I wrote the story.

Flynn: You think it's because you wrote the story?

Chris: Yeah.

Flynn: But you wrote it some days ago. Are you saying to me you're familiar with what's coming?

Chris: Yeah.

Flynn: Well, how is that for reading? What do you think about that for stuff to read?

Chris: Well . . . when you read your own piece it's easier to read because you know what's coming up and you don't stumble over them.

Flynn: Yes. You had some interesting things in there. You had an interesting sequence of events. What do I mean by that?

Chris: Like how it happened.

Flynn: The order in which it happened. You had some interesting language in there too. Dialogue? Did he have some dialogue in there?

Others: Yeah.

Flynn: Who was talking?

Jose: Jose and Juan.

Flynn: So he had characters. He had some characters in the story, he had some dialogue in the story. He had some interesting

description on how the accident really happened. One thing that was neat was your lead. "It was a beautiful day and everybody on my team wanted to play baseball." That's neat! You can do some interesting stuff with this if you want do. How do you feel about the mechanics? Your paragraphing and punctuation? All the mechanics of your language? Is there anything that you think you should fix?

Chris: Umm, maybe put a little more periods in there.

Flynn: You feel that you should go through and edit and put some periods in there. What do you think about your form, especially the form of the dialogue? Did you use correct form for dialogue?

Chris: I think so.

Flynn: O.K. When you have dialogue what must you have in the shape of the piece?

Chris: You should have quotation marks and commas.

Flynn: Yes, you should have quotation marks and commas, and that's punctuation. How about the shape of the piece? When do you indent? When do you start by the margin? Is there anything about the shape of the piece that ought to be fixed? Can anyone think of something about the shape of dialogue? What do you know about dialogue when the speaker changes?

Jose: New paragraph!

Flynn: New paragraph. Did you paragraph your dialogue?

Chris: Umm . . . dialogue? No.

Flynn: You did not paragraph your dialogue. O.K. Something I would ask you to do with this piece, and in order to do it you're going to have to set it up correctly mechanically. I'd ask you to make a reading lesson for the rest of the group. Now, you know how reading lessons go. Teachers ask you questions about the content. Right? Can you imagine how you could set up something like that? So you'd have to have your piece on a ditto, right? On the next page what would you have? If you wanted to do a lesson on the sequence of events how would you set that up?

Chris: Umm . . . Put a half of a sentence there then tell them to complete that sentence. Like Juan said what to Jose. Then you'd leave the rest and they'd have to write there.

Flynn: O.K. Then they'd have to go through the content and read it. What if you wanted to ask them what happened first, what happened second, what happened third? How would you write a

lesson about that?

Chris: Umm . . .

Flynn: Did you ever do any workbook pages like that?

Chris: Yeah! Like you put the sentences down. Then you put the little blanks and you have to number them one, two, three.

Flynn: Yes. That's what you've been doing. Can you make us up a sheet like that? You'll have to mix the stuff up won't you? Will you do that? Will you number one, fix the shape so that you can type the correct shape onto a ditto master? Will you then write some content questions? And will you make a worksheet on the sequence of events? Will you do that with your story? Then will you teach a lesson one day next week?

Chris: I'll try.

Flynn: Neat. Thank you.

Danny came to the conference with his Superman piece. He still had not gotten his moon trip piece together. He read.

Danny: *Superman is a hero. He is strong He saves people, He is very friendly, and he is very brave. He can fly when he is mad. He will get his enemy the joker. But there are a lot of enemies too. When all the enemies are in jail ther will be no more stealing but if one gets out he will let the other enemies go Then there will be more stealing. But super heroes always win. The End.*

Flynn: O.K. How about that story? What do you think about it?

Danny: It's O.K.

Flynn: What do you like about it?

Danny: I like the ending.

Flynn: Do you? Read the ending that you like.

Danny: *But super heroes always win.*

Flynn: That is a nice ending. It's fun isn't it? You like the way it sounds. What do you want to do?

Danny: Type it and make it look better.

Flynn: You'd like to type it. What would you change if you were going to change the way it looks?

Danny: I'd put this up here and put this line down there. Because I wasn't thinking so I skipped a line.

Flynn: You would do that. What else would you do?

Danny: Correct these words up here that you put there.

Flynn: Anything else?

Danny: No.

Flynn: You'd correct these words and fix the shape. Would you like to make a lesson from it? What does your piece do?

Danny: It tells about Superman.

Flynn: Does it tell what kind of person he is?

Danny: Yeah. Friendly. Brave.

Flynn: What are words like *brave* and *friendly?*

Danny: *Friendly* means he gets along with a lot of people. He doesn't hate people. He likes all kinds of people.

Flynn: When you started this piece on Superman you were working on characterization. You were going to describe a super hero. So you have words that describe. Do you know the part of speech that we call words that describe?

Danny: No.

Flynn: O.K. We call them adjectives. We call describing words adjectives. And, maybe there is something we can all learn if you'll make up a worksheet on adjectives for us. I'll be happy to work with you on that. If you will get your story written in the form that you would like it, we'll get you to type it. I'll help you to make a worksheet on adjectives from your story. O.K.

Danny: O.K.

Flynn: All right! So you want to go and do some writing. You want to copy correctly.

Brian had brought a surprise with him. I was told later that the self-initiated piece which Brian read at this conference had been inspired by a newspaper picture of the landing of the space ship *Columbia.*

Flynn: Read for us.

Brian: The title?

Flynn: Yes.

Brian: *My Trip To the Moon.*

It all started in a museum when me and Chris Simpson and Jose Melendez we were walking into a space ship when jose wanted to play dare on a control panel so Jose had to go first. I said push the count down button. Chris said no man, That's jive. That's jive. Jose said shutup and chris said no make me. So Jose said OK and they tried to kill each other. So I tried to stop it and chris pushed me and I hit the count down button. And we heard 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, and so on. We jumped in the suits and in the chairs and buckled in. And closed our eyes. Back went our heads and I was sweating.

Jose and Chris got in another fight when I was trying to drive it. I got tired of driving so Jose tried. Later I found out it's like a baby trying to drive a car. But finally we got there. Chris orbited around and me and Jose went out to collect rock samples. Jose wanted to play football but I said no. We got back in the space ship and went home We landed in the water it was fun and frustrating. The end.

Flynn: O.K. Would you like to hear yourself?

We listened to Brian's reading.

Flynn: What do you plan to do with this now?

Brian: Make better spelling, write it neater and paragraphs.

Flynn: Did you notice that you had dialogue?

Brian: Said?

Flynn: Yes. Where people talk. Did you use the proper shape?

Brian: No.

Flynn: O.K. First draft is it important?

Brian: No.

Flynn: No. Now you're going to a second draft. You're going to be looking for some specific things. You mentioned spelling and paragraphing.

Brian: Yeah.

Flynn: Well, then just concentrate on those two things this time. Then we'll look at it and see if there are any other mechanical things such as capital letters. When you go through you may pick up some names like Chris and Jose that you used small letters for. Come back with a second draft because you've got a good piece of fiction. Jose has some autobiographical material, and that's real. You've got some make-believe stuff and that's fiction. And we can get a good lesson on fiction from your story. So, you get some stuff done with the mechanics and with the shape of it so that we can get it typed into a story for the group and get some lessons on fiction from it. You've got some fantastic stuff, some make-believe stuff. You've got a simile in there. "It was like a baby trying to drive a car." We can teach a lot about fiction from your piece and we'll work on that after you get some correctness to it. O.K.?

Brian: O.K.

Flynn: Thank you.

Jose shared his current autobiographical writing:

My name is Jose Melendez. I have two best friends Chris Simpson and Brian McKenna. I am eleven years old. I have six sisters and no brothers. Sometimes my cousins stay at my house. My father works in the National Rolling Mill. My mother stays home seeing soap operas. and so are my sisters and I am doing my fathers work while my dad is at work.

The first time I met Brian was when I and him were in math classroom in second grade. Miss Snyder said that Brian should help me so we became friends

I met Chris when we were in the playground. When we were fighting I had a bloody nose and Chris had a bloody nose too, So we went down to Mr. Pitt and we were friends so that's how we hang around each other.

Flynn: O.K. What are you going to do with that? (long pause) Are you thinking? (long pause) What do you think about it?

Jose: It's good.

Flynn: What makes it good?

Jose: The . . . the indents.

Flynn: Oh, you like the shape of it? You're saying that you paragraphed correctly. You did. You did paragraph well.

Jose: I made some mistakes.

Flynn: You feel that you made some mistakes. You know, the correct form for this is, "When he and I." You wrote it down like people speak. That's called informal language. But if you're writing you're supposed to write formally in this piece. Formally we say, "He and I." What else about it?

Brian: It's good.

Flynn: What's good about it?

Brian: The paragraphing was good and it's a good story.

Flynn: You like what he said. Do you like how he said it?

Brian: Yes.

Flynn: It was amusing to me when you told about you and Chris meeting by fighting and you both had a bloody nose. I did not know that you two had been friends since second grade. You've been in class together for three years.

Brian: Yep.

Jose: In every single grade I've been with Brian.

Flynn: Oh, you guys are like brothers almost.

Jose: Yep!

Danny: I knew Jose in Ms. Snyder's room too.

Brian: ! was in Ms. Snyder's math and reading class. You go to Miss Best then come down to the lower pod to Ms. Snyder.

Flynn: What are you going to do with your piece now.

Jose: Make it better.

Flynn: You're going to make it better?

Jose: Write more.

Flynn: You're going to write more . . . and make it better. Are there any special things that you plan to do to make it better? (long pause) What usually happens to a piece when you decide to make it better? What do you usually go back and do?

Jose: Read it.

Flynn: You read it over. What happens in your head when you're reading it over?

Jose: It makes up more ideas.

Flynn: Does it stimulate your memory? You're shaking your head yes and you're shaking your hand, "I don't know, Mrs. Flynn. What does that mean?" It sort of tickles your brain and makes new thoughts come. Do you find more detail? Do you stick it in your story? You did with your other pieces. They grew in detail. They became more interesting every time you revised them. So, that's what you are going to do. Will you come back to us when you feel finished? Read it to us again and maybe you'll set up a reading lesson you could present. Think of whether you want people to look for verbs or adjectives or other parts of speech. You have interesting stuff in there. When you talk about fighting you should have a lot of what kind of words?

After a short discussion the Composing Group agreed that Jose could well develop a lesson on verbs because fighting was a high action activity. Figure Two below is the lesson developed by Jose using his revised story.

During the second week of May the Composing Group taught its lessons to each other and the four girls in the basal group. It was interesting to note amid the giggles and titters that Brian's approach to discussing his lesson was built around writing conference questions.

Brian: O.K. Now, what did you hear when Vicky read the story?
Who were the characters in the story?
What part did you like best?
Was there any dialogue? Who was talking?

READ AND FIGURE

by Jose Melendez

Read this story and circle the verbs and use the dictionary if you're in trouble.

My name is Jose Melendez. I'm 11 years old. I have six sisters and no brothers. Sometimes my cousins stay at my house.

My father works at the National Rolling Mill. My mother stays home watching soap operas. While my sisters are too watching soap opera I'm doing my father's work while he is at work.

I have two best friends. They are Brian McKenna and Chris Simpson. The first time I met Brian was at math class. It was at second grade in Ms. Snyder's room. Ms. Snyder told Brian to help me so we became friends.

When I met Chris it was at recess. He and I were fighting outside at recess. He had a bloody nose and I had a bloody nose too. So we went down to Mr. Pitt and Then we became friends and that's why we hang around each other.

then we met Danny Green and we became friends. We got in a lot of trouble with the teachers and people especially Ms. Snyder and Mrs. Dougherty.

Then in fourth grade we had a gang called the Dragons. We got like 15 boys in the gang. We got in a lot of trouble. We had sweat jackets and we printed words on it.

One day Jeorge Collon was fighting with Mark Lux. One of the teachers saw us fighting. We couldn't wear our sweat jackets for two weeks. Now we are in fifth grade and we are more smarter.

List the verbs. Then make a story with the verbs.

Figure Two

Chris's approach, surprisingly, was mainly aimed at sequencing information. Jose collected all the students' work, graded it, and returned it. Danny was a very strict teacher. He allowed no talking and forced each student to use the dictionary to define the parts of speech. It was a cacophony of humor, pride, and learning as they struggled with their embarrassment and eagerness.

Figure Three below represents the lesson written by Danny.

SUPERMAN

by Daniel Scott Green

Superman is a hero. He is strong. He saves people. He's very friendly. And he is very brave. He can fly when he is mad. He will get his enemy Lex Luther. But there are a lot of enemies too. When all the enemies are in jail, there will be no more stealing. but if one gets out, he will let the other enemies go. Then there will be more stealing. But super heroes always win.

Directions:

1. Match these words with the parts of speech.

Story Words	Parts of Speech
_____ 1. strong	1. noun
_____ 2. friendly	2. verb
_____ 3. brave	3. pronoun
_____ 4. super hero	4. adverb
_____ 5. very	5. adjective
_____ 6. hero	6. conjunction
	7. interjection
	8. preposition

2. Look up the parts of speech in the dictionary.

Figure Three

Figure Four below is the lesson written by Chris on his "Careless Playing" piece. On page 22 there is a sample of the story and worksheet from which Brian taught.

Evident in these student-constructed lessons were the following basal-designed skills:

1. *Ordering events:* demonstrated by worksheets produced by both Brian and Chris in their sequencing exercises; demonstrated by Jose in his step-by-step description of the developing friendship of this group of boys.
2. *Form:* demonstrated by Jose's work on paragraphing major events;

CARELESS PLAYING

by Christopher Simpson

It was a beautiful day and everybody on my team wanted to play baseball. We were playing up at St. Agnes. Jose was up to bat.

He said, "I'll knock this ball down your throat."

"Sure you will, Jose," said Juan.

The pitch! Jose hit the ball into right field. Juan went back to the wall and made a diving catch.

We were getting ready to go to another park. I went to get the baseball bat out of my house. I got to the wall of St. Agnes. My friend told me to throw the bat up to him, but he missed it and it hit me in the forehead. There was blood all over the sidewalk. I ran into the house and got a rag for my forehead.

My uncle got the car out of the garage and he took me to the hospital. We must have been going very fast because we got to the hospital in no time flat.

When I got into the hospital they put a needle into my cut six times, and so the skin would be even they cut some skin off with a razor. Then they gave me two stiches inside the cut and seven outside.

When we got home my mom looked at my pupils to see if one was bigger than the other one so she could tell if I had a concussion. I did have a slight one. I am O.K. now.

Put these sentences in order according to the story.

_____Jose hit the ball into deep right field.

_____We were playing up at St. Agnes.

_____He said, "I'll knock this ball down your throat."

_____There was blood all over the sidewalk.

_____I did have a slight one.

Put these words in a story.

Jose	park	concussion	baseball
I'll	pitch	skin	friend
bigger	seven	uncle	razor
hospital	because	forehead	another
sidewalk	garage	needle	

Figure Four

MY TRIP TO THE MOON

by Brian McKenna

It all started in a museum when Chris Simpson, Jose Melendez and I were walking in the spaceship. Jose wanted to play dare on the control panel. Jose had to go first.

I said, "Push the count down button."

Chris said, "Na man, that's jive. That's jive."

Jose said, "Shut up!"

Chris said, "You make me!"

Jose tried and they killed each other. I tried to stop it. Chris pushed me and I hit the count down button. We heard 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and so we jumped into suits and the chairs. We buckled in. I was sweating. Back went our heads.

Jose and Chris got into another fight while I was trying to fly the spaceship. I got tired so Jose wanted to fly it. Later I found out that it was like a baby trying to drive a car. Finally, we got there. Chris orbited around while Jose and I went to collect rock samples. Jose wanted to play football. I said, "No." We got back in the ship and went home.

We landed on the ground. The ship can be used one hundred times. The engine only once or it will blow up.

Read the story and put the sentences in order.

_____We landed on the ground.

_____Jose wanted to play football.

_____It all started in a museum when Chris, Jose and I were walking in the spaceship.

_____I got tired so Jose wanted to fly it.

Look up these words on a separate sheet of paper.

1. museum	2. orbit	3. land	4. countdown
5. samples	6. control	7. ground	8. sweat
9. suits	10. collect	11. panel	

Figure Five

Brian's and Chris's work on the form of dialogue and the shape of their lessons; shown by Danny's use of space as he set up his exercises and decided how the page should be organized.

3. *Setting:* demonstrated best by Brian as he placed the story first in the museum, then in the space ship, the moon, and finally back home.
4. *Plot:* perhaps most apparent in Brian's piece, "My Trip to the Moon," but emerging at an immature level in Danny's Superman piece.
5. *Character traits:* obvious in Danny's description of Superman, but discernible as Jose describes the behavior of his Dragons and as Brian reveals events through dialogue which lead to his moon flight. We also see character development in the talk written by Chris in his "Careless Playing" piece.
6. *Cause and effect:* made apparent by Brian's explanation of how he got to the moon, Jose's description of how the gang got into trouble, and Chris's disclosure of the results of his carelessness.
7. *Realism and fantasy:* combined nicely by Brian in his factual information about the space ship and his fantastic trip. It is also demonstrated in Jose's and Chris's decision to do autobiographical pieces while Danny chose to use a make-believe personality.
8. *Similies:* clearly intentional as Brian writes, "It was like a baby trying to drive a car."
9. *Parts of speech:* obvious in lessons on verbs and adjectives but more subtly included in the attention paid to proper nouns in the stories and the attention necessary to avoid using pronouns without the defining noun being in use.
10. *Fiction vs. non-fiction:* obvious in the choices of topics that each student made.
11. *Conjunctions:* best used by Chris and Brian at this time for joining compound sentences.
12. *Commas in series:* demonstrated at least twice in Brian's piece where he lists his characters and as he takes the reader through the countdown to take off.
13. *Main idea:* clearly evident in the stories supporting the titles chosen by Brian and Chris as they wrote.

May 22 began publication of the final issue of the newspaper. The group, now under the direction of Chris, Brian, Jose, and Danny, agreed to include some short stories, reports on trips, poems, and an interview with the gym teacher. Danny wrote

It was late afternoon. A camper stopped where there was no stop sign. Our bus tried to avoid hitting the camper but we slid into the camper.

We all fell forward. Two students were injured. Vicky Beecher got hit on the head. I was thrown into the seat in front of me. The wind was knocked out of me and I couldn't breathe.

The ambulance arrived shortly after our accident. I was taken to the hospital to be checked out. At the hospital x-rays were taken and I was examined. My Dad came to the hospital after he was told of the accident. We stayed there until after 11:30 P.M. I was allowed to go home then.

I got home and watched T.V. The next day my Dad and I went out for breakfast. He had potatoes, bacon and eggs plus orange juice. I had the same.

Monday I came back to school but I was still very sore. I felt much better then.

Brian and Jose's interview paper began with the question "How did you become a gym teacher?"

Mr. Burke: I became a gym teacher by majoring in physical education.

Q.: Where did you go to college?

and so continued a series of ten question and answers which were of interest to the Composing Group.

Danny was feeling most prolific on this occasion, so he composed again:

Wednesday was the Track Day. We had to go to lunch at 12:00 P.M. because we had to leave at 12:30. When we got to South Campus Mrs. Flynn said, "Do not run off this bus or you will not do the event at the end of the school year." So she said, "The right side gets off the bus first."

When we got to the stadium Mr. Burke told us to go to the risers. We did.

When they called the fifth grade hi-jump there were about 40 girls. . . .

And so he continued through four additional paragraphs of discussion on the track day experience.

The newspaper went to press with much flourish on the part of the Composing Group. It was a grand happening!

The final Composing Group project was to be a series of short stories written by the group and compiled into a small book which they

would share with their classmates. At this point Danny's moon trip story came to life. After a month of struggling he found its voice:

One day Kyle and I had to go to the moon. Here comes the count down. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 . . . Off we go! When we got in space the rocket was falling apart. We landed on the moon five days late because I forgot to tighten the nuts. When we got all the parts from floating in space we put the rocket back together.

We contacted the Earth and they said to collect some moon rocks. "O.K." said Kyle.

We did and Kyle and I got back in the space ship. We left the moon. We got back to Mother Earth in three days. We got to the Atlantic Ocean. The boat picked us up. There were a lot of people watching us ride in the car. There were a lot of people watching us on T.V. too. We were in the newspaper.

The morning after I gave the short story assignment, Jose reported to school with a story in his hip pocket:

THE SUGARHILL GANG

On April Fools Day, 2003, there were a group of young men over on a street corner. They were going to have a gang because people were getting hurt. The gang was going to stop crime before Jim Florio did. They called the gang the Sugarhill Gang.

There were eight guys in the gang. They were all in Mrs. Flynn's class. The guys are Matt T. Gary R. Deron F. Jon S. Kyle C. Jose M. Chris S. and Brian Mc.

The same day the gang got organized Jose, Brian and Chris saw a robber leaving from the First National Bank and we put the handcuffs on. The other guys were looking for criminals.

One time two robbers shot Brian. Chris and Jose got mad, and every single time we caught a robber we'd go and get another.

And Brian got better.

This piece was handed to me with the explanation that he intended to write a class song and a play. Weighing the value of a revision against the level of thought he would apply to a play and song, I handed him my tape recorder, a bunch of paper, a thesaurus, and gave my permission to use the soundproof booth in the pod area outside of the room.

In composing the class song Jose recruited Brian and Chris. They borrowed a tambourine, a bongo drum, and a tom-tom from the music teacher. Then, emulating a current popular tune of chant set to music, they composed what must have been a somewhat risqué lyric about the classroom characters. They chanted it into the tape recorder together

with some dissonant percussive rhythms and created an immediate hit with the class. I could not understand a word of it. Jose would not share his writing. He folded it reverently into his pocket, promising to rewrite it. I never saw it again. The tape quietly disappeared.

The play went through four private revisions. Jose set up the form, did his editing, and submitted it for publication as follows:

NARRATOR	*One day there were a lot of young men in a street corner. The gang was talking about having a gang. They're having the gang because people are getting hurt.*
MASTER G.:	*Let's put a gang together.*
MR. MUSCLE:	*Why?*
MR. COOL:	*Because people are getting hurt.*
BOOGIE BROTHER:	*Let's call ourselves the Sugarhill Gang.*
SKINNY LENNY:	*Yeah.*
MR. CLEAN:	*Let's put these guys in the slammer.*
SKINNY WORM:	*Well --- OK.*
NARRATOR:	*The next day the gang had to learn self-defense. So they learned karate and all you can think of.*
MR. COOL:	*Here is where we can get a chance.*
MR. MUSCLE:	*Oh, yes.*
MASTER G:	*Come, let's get him before he goes.*
MR. CLEAN:	*There he goes.*
NARRATOR:	*And Master G. got him from behind and Mr. Muscle got the gun out of his hands.*
MASTER G:	*Go call the cops!*
MR. COOL:	*Hey, Mr. Muscle, go and call the cops.*
MR. MUSCLE:	*Operator, give me the police. We got Mugsy the robber.*
NARRATOR:	*Then after that the gang started to get sleepy, then they heard a gun shot and then they were waking up.*
MR. COOL:	*What was that?*
MASTER G.:	*That was a gun shot.*
MR. MUSCLE:	*Come on, let's go!*
BOOGIE BROTHER:	*It came from over there.*

SKINNY: *Just come on.*

NARRATOR: *The same time Mr. Cool said, "Freeze—don't move," the robber turned the gun and shot Mr. Cool.*

MR. MUSCLE: *Watch out Master G.!*

NARRATOR: *The other robber was pointing at Mr. Muscle and the other one was pointing at Master G.*

In Spanish, Master G. and Mr. Muscle said, "Go!" so they kicked the guns out of the robbers hands and the other guys got the cops.

After, Mr. Cool got better.

by Jose Melendez

The Composing Group functioned with few basic tools. Included in this list were

1. Five-by-eight size composition books which were used as personal dictionaries. In these each student recorded the correct spelling for words they commonly needed but usually misspelled.
2. Dictionaries. Because their thinking and speaking vocabularies far exceeded their reading and spelling vocabulary, this was essential.
3. Thesauri. One basic elementary level and one designed for high school use. These were useful in vocabulary development and learning subtle differences in word meanings.
4. Five-by-eight composition books into which final drafts were to be copied into a collection of writings which could be read with confidence.
5. A choice of writing paper on which to compose.
6. A typewriter.
7. A box in which all pieces in progress were kept.

Perhaps no one will ever know all the changes of a personal nature which occurred within the Composing Group. I know this is true of Danny. In October he fearfully produced ten or so words of composition and gave up in frustration. By June he was composing of his own initiative. In the last issue of the classroom newspaper he had two articles published on topics he had decided to write about. One was the personal narrative of his [illegible]wreck injury, the other was the report on the track day experience of [illegible] fourth and fifth graders at West Chester State College.

During the last week of May, as I observed Danny working out his "Bus Wreck" piece, I tried to document some noticeable changes in his behavior. Prior to March, his average attention span on task was about ten minutes. At this point in May, he often sat at the typewriter for an hour, pecking his thoughts out on the keyboard. He concentrated for as much as thirty minutes at a time on independent revisions of his writing. He read his compositions and those of the other Composing Group students with fluency and pride and without frustration. He joked and smiled, and made comments on things which he had learned.

"If you put a period," he proudly explained one day late in March, "then you have to use a capital letter when you start again. That means you have a new sentence."

I looked into those satisfied great brown eyes. "So, you've been over there thinking!" I remember saying. "Be careful. That'll make you smart. Come show me what you wrote."

It began to occur that on book report days Danny was prepared. He read Easy Reader biographies and gave complete and orderly reports on George Washington's boyhood and Johnny Appleseed. This was a triumph for him. When the class read their weekly vocabulary stories, stories constructed around a given set of vocabulary words, Danny began to present short stories using a few words of his choosing. Bits of learning from subject areas started appearing in Danny's compositions. "We got back to Mother Earth," he wrote in his moon trip piece. "We got to the Atlantic Ocean." "He's been learning in social studies," I remember thinking, "and he's applying that information."

Danny began to display a sense of satisfaction with his work. Instead of moaning that he had made a mistake, he began to say quietly, "Wait, I've got to fix this."

"Chris knows how to fix bikes for people," Jose volunteered during a conversation which erupted as we held a conference one day. "He can make a five speed bike out of a ten speed."

This seemed fruit for an informational piece which would give Chris the needed exercise in sequencing ideas. "Do a piece to publish for the class," I suggested. "Lots of people would enjoy knowing how to do that."

"Aw, man. Anybody can fix a bike!" Chris groaned.

"Then why do they ask you to do it?"

"I don't know. I can't write no piece on fixing bikes."

"Try."

Later I stopped by to see how the piece was progressing. Chris was deep in thought. I read:

how to fix a bike.

Do you know how to make a five speed rim. Out of a plane rim. first you unscrey the spokes of the plane rim and unscrey the ten speed rim and you take the gears off of the tenspeed rim and put the gears on the plane rim and put the spokes in the plane rim and you have a fivespeed rim and put it on the bike and titen the rim on the bike and you can ride it.

"That's an interesting way to start. What is a plain rim?" I asked.

"The rim on a twenty inch bike," he grumbled. "Aw, man, I don't want to do this."

"Won't it be clearer if you stick that in the piece?" I asked him.

"What?"

"The fact that it's a twenty inch bike. That way your audience will better understand what you're telling them."

"Audience, I don't write for no audience."

"Well, who do you write for?"

"I write for myself."

"Yeah, you write for yourself, man," came the supporting comment from Jose of the omnipresent ear.

"How do you mean?"

Chris explained with Job-like patience. "You write to get better. To see if you can tell it. And you read it to see if it's good. Then if it's good it makes you feel good. Then you want to write another piece."

"Oh! Do you think you'll finish the bike piece?"

"Well, I'll try, but I don't think it's going to work."

It didn't. I found the aborted piece in our box while Chris pursued an altogether different interest, "Careless Play."

Chris could not function in the hub-bub of the classroom with three groups of readers all involved in different activities. He often retreated to the soundproof booths available near the classroom area. His listlessness subsided and his attention span increased. He could compose and revise tirelessly for periods of an hour at a time.

Several times he came to me for permission to use the library for reference materials. He would direct others of the group to materials in the library. He assumed a leadership role in the publication of the classroom newspaper, often skipping his recess period to work on the paper. He stopped getting into trouble at school.

The thing that Brian was most proud of was his success with the moon trip piece. He ceased to be intimidated by the dictionary. It

became his tool. "How can you find a word in the dictionary if you don't know how to spell it?" he asked one day. We discussed trying different letters which we knew made certain sounds. He braced himself to try and eventually found his own solution. I think it came after he saw a number of his classmates join his teacher in a frantic search for the word *siphon.*

"Here," he said to me, "give me the dictionary. I'm as good at that as you are." I sedately handed the offensive tool over to him, but inside I was a happy teacher.

On his second draft of the moon trip piece Brian counted 220 words. He counted them because this was the most words he had written in his life. He had come a long way from the fifteen printed words of October. His piece had form, mechanical correctness, and purpose. It was exciting, interesting, and it was his—his topic, his imagination, his style, his knowledge and his voice.

Jose found his voice and became an independent student. I need not describe my satisfaction. He could be expected to take any assignment and work toward its completion. He was capable of eight to ten revisions while improving a piece. He could apply the mechanics of grammar on a par with any of his classmates, and when tested on a classroom skills test could be expected to score above 80 percent.

In early July I was informed by the reading specialist that the middle school receiving three of these students was willing to continue with the Reading through Writing Program. So I am to share this process, and the boys are to continue.

The Author

Joan Duvall Flynn is a fifth grade teacher at Hillsdale Elementary School in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She is a 1980 Fellow of the Pennsylvania Writing Project at West Chester State College.

As a result of her fellowship, she now makes presentations on the process approach to the teaching of writing to both elementary and high school teachers. In 1982 she served as a member of the West Chester Area School District Language Arts Committee which prepared a district guide to the teaching of writing. She is also a member of the Writing Evaluation Committee which is developing standards for the holistic evaluation of student writing within the West Chester area schools.

A native of Sandusky, Ohio, Mrs. Flynn received her B.S. in education from Bowling Green State University in Ohio in 1974. She has since taken graduate courses in the field of elementary education at several Pennsylvania universities.

Mrs. Flynn lives in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, ten miles southeast of West Chester, with her husband, J.B., and their three school-age children.